

Industry began with a crude sawmill

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Beginnings of industry in Camas go back to 1846 when Jacob Hansaker had a saw mill built for him by David Parker and William Ryan on the banks of the lake nearest the Columbia. That was, it will be remembered, just two years before Captain Sutter made his famous gold strike in California to precipitate the great rush of pioneers to the West.

Crudely fashioned and equipped with but one saw, Hansaker's mill continued in operation for a few years before becoming prey to fire. The next mill to be constructed was one by the Hudson's Bay Co. in 1851 but it, too, was burned a few years later.

In 1852, a third mill was erected by H.J.G. Maxon just above where the highway fill crosses

district was then called, and immediately directed the manager to enter into negotiations for the purchase of land sufficient to command the whole water supply.

Without delay, 2,600 acres of land were bought on either side of the three lakes and embracing both sides of Lackamas creek to its mouth at the Washougal river, thus giving the company entire rights over a lake several square miles in extent and a stream more than a mile in length, with a fall in that distance of 170 feet.

To utilize this force it became necessary to build a series of dams at the southern end of the lakes, work starting on July 31, 1883. The dams raised the level of the water of the lakes several feet.

In addition building of an aqueduct was begun (mill

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Lackamas creek at the creamery. Maxon's little plant was also razed by fire and after that the community was without an industry until 1883 when the Camas Colony Co. began operation.

In the meantime, the vanguard of a hardy band of settlers had come into the region bringing their wives and families with them. In 1850 they began the painful task of clearing out homesteads from the stands of virgin timber and soon a few rude dwellings had sprung up.

The Camas region still belonged to the Indians, however. By the hundreds they still camped along the Washougal and Columbia rivers, catching and drying their salmon and hunting in the forest. Their tepee pits are still visible along the Washougal and the old-timers still remember the great powwows and potlatches held nearby.

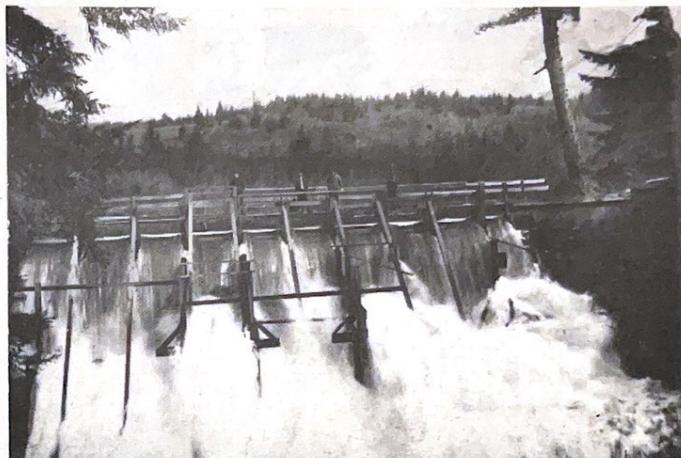
The Camas Colony Co., responsible for the first real development of the city, was organized in Portland with Henry L. Pitcock as president and D. H. Stearns as manager. It was organized for the purpose of founding a town and bringing into use the waterpower so readily available. On May 12, 1883, members of the company inspected the territory around LaCamas as the

ditch) designed to carry water from the lakes to the mill which was being erected on the banks of the Columbia. The aqueduct was 7000 feet in length, eight feet wide and seven feet deep and was mostly the work of Chinese laborers.

It was in 1883 that Camas was laid out as a town, with Aeneas MacMaster building the first store. Among other improvements in 1886 were a Presbyterian church and a school house. Miss Elizabeth MacMaster taught Camas' first school in a one-room shack in 1883. Other temporary quarters were used for a school until 1886.

The greatest improvement of all, however, the Columbia Paper mill, was started in 1884. A small sawmill on Lackamas lake, built by the Camas Colony Co., sawed the lumber for the paper mill and before the end of the year the first paper mill was practically completed.

In 1906 Camas was incorporated as a fourth class town and J.J. Harrington was elected first mayor. In 1907 the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railroad was completed and Camas was established as one of the most progressive and thriving towns of the state.



THIS DAM on the upper part of Lackamas Lake was built in 1902 by L.E. Tidland. It was completely replaced in 1923 by E.H. Tidland, and was in turn replaced with a concrete and steel structure. The photo was taken in about 1916, according to Mrs. E. Tidland, during a winter flood. Standing on the dam, from left, are Charles McKeever, Ruben Purrier Sr., Ruben Purrier Jr. and Aubry McKeever.



THIS FARM AND GREENHOUSES were photographed in the early 1900s. Identified as being situated somewhere between the present Sixth and Seventh avenues in Camas, the greenhouses were, before they went out of business in 1914-15, making a thriving living for their owners, who shipped fresh produce by boat into Portland.



THE STEAMER "Hattie Bell," built in Portland in 1882 (abandoned 1898) loads paper out of the west end of the Camas mill during the 1894 Columbia River flood. Superintendent C.S. West's house is in background. Brick building at left is old finishing room, removed in 1912 to make room for Nos. 6, 7 and 8 paper machines, according to Mrs. E. Tidland.